

FCC Tribal Workshop
Hosted by the Lummi Nation

Preventing Digital Discrimination Listening Session

D'wana R. Terry
Special Advisor to Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel
Task Force to Prevent Digital Discrimination
Federal Communications Commission
July 12, 2023

Task Force to Prevent Digital Discrimination

▶ Formation and Focus

- ▶ On February 8, 2022, Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel announced the Task Force's formation
- ▶ Its Focus: Creating rules and policies to combat digital discrimination and to promote equal access to broadband across the country, regardless of zip code, income level, ethnicity, race, religion, or national origin.
 - ▶ The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act tasked the FCC with several directives to combat digital discrimination.
 - ▶ The Task Force is leading the FCC's implementation of Section 60506 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act regarding the prevention and elimination of digital discrimination.
 - ▶ The Task Force is overseeing the development of model policies and best practices states and local governments can adopt that ensure that internet service providers do not engage in digital discrimination.
 - ▶ The Task Force is also overseeing the FCC's efforts to allow its public complaint process to seek feedback more prominently from consumers who may be facing digital discrimination in their communities.

Task Force to Prevent Digital Discrimination

▶ Leadership Team

- ▶ Dwana Terry
- ▶ Sanford Williams, Special Advisor to Chairwoman Rosenworcel and Deputy Managing Director
- ▶ Alejandro Roark, Chief, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau

▶ Task Force Team (Bureau and Office Representation)

- ▶ Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
- ▶ Enforcement Bureau
- ▶ Media Bureau
- ▶ Office of Economics and Analytics
- ▶ Office of General Counsel
- ▶ Wireline Competition Bureau
- ▶ Wireless Telecommunications Bureau

Implementing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Prevention and Elimination of Digital Discrimination (GN Docket No. 22-69)

- ▶ On March 16, 2022, the Commission adopted a Notice of Inquiry (NOI) commencing a proceeding “to ensure that all people of the United States benefit from equal access to broadband internet access service.”
- ▶ One of the Commission’s foremost goals is to ensure that every person in the United States has equal access to high-quality, affordable broadband internet access service.
- ▶ With the NOI, the FCC initiated the process of establishing a shared understanding of the harms experienced by historically excluded and marginalized communities and provided a grounding for meaningful policy reforms and systems improvements, as well as a framework for collaborative action to extend digital opportunity to everyone.

Implementing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Prevention and Elimination of Digital Discrimination (GN Docket No. 22-69)

Notice of Inquiry Overview

- ▶ In the NOI, the Commission sought to prevent and identify steps the FCC should take to eliminate “digital discrimination of access based on income level, race, ethnicity, color, religion, or national origin,” consistent with Congress’s directive in section 60506 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.
- ▶ Specifically, we asked for comment on the meaning of the terms and concepts included in the relevant provisions of the Act and how they should be applied in the context of ensuring equal access to broadband, preventing digital discrimination, and identifying steps the Commission should take to eliminate digital discrimination.
- ▶ We also asked for comment on the framework of the rules we should adopt to achieve the goal of ensuring all people in the United States have equal access to broadband.

Implementing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Prevention and Elimination of Digital Discrimination (GN Docket No. 22-69)

Section 60506

- ▶ Section 60506(c) requires the Commission and the Attorney General to ensure that “[f]ederal policies promote equal access to robust broadband internet access service by prohibiting deployment discrimination based on (1) the income level of an area; (2) the predominant race or ethnic[] composition of an area; or (3) other factors the Commission determines to be relevant based on the findings in the record developed from the rulemaking under subsection (b).”
- ▶ Section 60506(d) requires the Commission to “develop model policies and best practices that can be adopted by States and localities to ensure that broadband internet access service providers do not engage in digital discrimination.”
- ▶ Section 60506(e) directs the Commission to “revise its public complaint process to accept complaints from consumers or other members of the public that relate to digital discrimination.”

Implementing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Prevention and Elimination of Digital Discrimination (GN Docket No. 22-69)

Communications Equity and Diversity Council (CEDC)

- ▶ *June 29, 2021*: FCC chartered the CEDC with a mission “to present recommendations to the Commission on “advancing equity in the provision of and access to digital communication services and products for all people of the United States, without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, or disability.”
- ▶ *November 7, 2022*: CEDC adopted a report titled “Recommendations and Best Practices to Prevent Digital Discrimination and Promote Digital Equity,” including a portion developed by its Digital Empowerment and Inclusion Working Group recommending both (1) model policies and best practices to prevent digital discrimination by broadband providers, and (2) best practices to advance digital equity for states and localities.

Implementing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Prevention and Elimination of Digital Discrimination (GN Docket No. 22-69)

- ▶ On December 21, 2022, the Commission adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) seeks comment on next steps to promote and facilitate equal access to broadband internet service for everyone, with the goal of creating a framework for combatting digital discrimination that has caused harm to historically excluded and marginalized communities.
- ▶ The NPRM builds on the robust comment offered by a broad array of stakeholders in response to March 2022 NOI, and seeks further, focused comment on the statutory language and the proposals suggested in the record, with the goal of establishing a framework for facilitating equal access and addressing digital discrimination of access.

Implementing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Prevention and Elimination of Digital Discrimination (GN Docket No. 22-69)

Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Overview

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeks comment on:

- ▶ Proposed definition of “digital discrimination of access” as used in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.
- ▶ Proposed revisions to the FCC’s informal consumer complaint process to accept complaints of digital discrimination.
- ▶ Proposed adoption of model policies and best practices for states and localities to combat digital discrimination based on recommendations from the Communications Equity and Diversity Council.
- ▶ Further details of the rules the Commission should adopt to facilitate equal access to broadband internet service and prevent “digital discrimination of access,” as well as identification of necessary steps for the elimination of such discrimination.

NPRM Summary: Definition

We . . . propose to define “digital discrimination of access,” for purposes of this proceeding, as one or a combination of the following:

- (1) “policies or practices, not justified by genuine issues of technical or economic feasibility, that differentially impact consumers’ access to broadband internet access service based on their income level, race, ethnicity, color, religion, or national origin”; and/or
- (2) “policies or practices, not justified by genuine issues of technical or economic feasibility, that **are intended to** differentially impact consumers’ access to broadband internet access service based on their income level, race, ethnicity, color, religion, or national origin.” (FCC 22-98, para. 12) (emphasis added)

NPRM Summary: Rules

Broad prohibition

- Seeks comment on whether to adopt a broad prohibition on digital discrimination of access, and details including:
 - Analytical framework
 - Enforcement
 - Complaints

Affirmative obligations

- Seeks comment on whether to place obligations on providers to address digital discrimination, including:
 - Auditing/reporting
 - Transparency
 - HUD model

Other proceedings

- Seeks comment on other proceedings in which FCC should take action to address digital discrimination, including:
 - Infrastructure
 - Spectrum
 - Funding programs

NPRM Summary: Other Provisions

60506(d) Model State and local policies



“We propose to adopt [recommended] . . . (1) model policies and best practices to prevent digital discrimination by broadband providers, and (2) best practices to advance digital equity for states and localities.” (FCC 22-98, para. 93)

60506(e) Complaints



“We propose to revise our informal consumer complaint process to accept complaints of digital discrimination of access . . . [and] make anonymized complaint data available to the public.” (FCC 22-98, para. 52)

Next Steps

Ongoing outreach and
stakeholder engagement

NPRM

Comments due 2/21/23

Replies due 4/20/23

Task Force to Prevent Digital Discrimination

Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement

- ▶ FCC webpage: <https://www.fcc.gov/task-force-prevent-digital-discrimination>
- ▶ Meeting Requests: PreventDigitalDiscrimination@fcc.gov

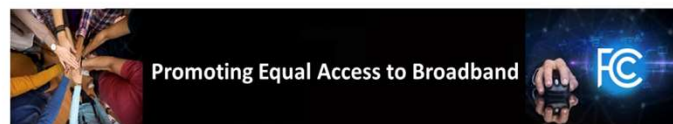
Task Force to Prevent Digital Discrimination



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Task Force to Prevent Digital Discrimination

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"In the very first sentence of the Communications Act, Congress directs the Federal Communications Commission to help make communications services available to 'all the people of the United States ... without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex.' This language is not new. But it is time to address it with new urgency."
- FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel

Everyone, regardless of where they live and who they are, needs access to robust high speed broadband services for 21st century success. Where broadband networks get built shouldn't be determined by the income, race, ethnicity, or religion of the communities they will serve. To promote equal access, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act requires the FCC to create rules and policies to address digital discrimination and redlining.

Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel has announced the formation of a cross-agency Task Force to Prevent Digital Discrimination that will focus on creating rules and policies to combat digital discrimination and to promote equal access to broadband throughout the U.S., regardless of zip code, income level, ethnicity, race, religion, or national origin.

Congress also directed the FCC to develop model policies and best practices state and local governments could adopt to help prevent digital discrimination in their communities. The Task Force will also oversee this important work. Additionally, Congress has asked the FCC to review its consumer complaint process. The Task Force will also be working to improve the way the agency seeks feedback from consumers who may be facing digital discrimination in their communities.

At the FCC's March 16, 2022 Open Meeting, the Commission approved a Notice of Inquiry to start a proceeding (GN Docket No. 22-69) on these initiatives.

Broadband Access Experience Form

Share your unique experiences and challenges in obtaining broadband internet access. By sharing your broadband access stories, you will help the FCC to identify barriers experienced by historically underserved and underserved communities and inform the work of the Task Force.



Additional Outreach Initiative: Consumer Stories About Broadband Access

- ▶ On January 25, 2023, the Task Force announced launch of a platform offering consumers an opportunity to share their stories and experiences in obtaining broadband internet access.
- ▶ FCC Chairwoman Rosenworcel noted that with this initiative: “We want to give consumers the opportunity to share their first-hand experiences and challenges getting and staying online. This will help inform our understanding of when, where, and why digital discrimination happens and will provide important insight for our work moving forward.”
- ▶ We envision that stories shared by consumers will help to inform the work of the Task Force, particularly regarding the agency’s implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Additional Outreach Initiative: Consumer Stories About Broadband Access

- ▶ Using the form, consumers can provide specific details about their broadband access experience, including the name of the provider, consumer's address and any other information that describes the challenges that they have experienced, including those due to a provider's practices and policies related to certain terms and conditions of service, such as those concerning speeds, data caps, throttling, late fees, equipment rentals and installation, contract renewal or termination, customer credit or account history, promotional rates, price or how technical support is provided.
- ▶ Significantly, the Broadband Access Experience Form is meant to capture narrative information about the unique circumstances, conditions, and experience of consumers. **Submission of the form does not constitute filing a consumer complaint with the FCC.**



Affordable Connectivity Program

Jamile Kadre
Attorney Advisor
Telecommunications Access Policy Division
Wireline Competition Bureau
Federal Communications Commission

AGENDA

- ACP Overview
- Recent Enhancements to the ACP Consumer Application
- ACP Resources
- Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program

Affordable Connectivity Program

Background

The Affordable Connectivity Program is an FCC program that provides eligible low-income households a discount off their monthly broadband service and a one-time discount off a connected device. The program is a successor of the FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, which also offered discounted monthly broadband service and a one-time connected device discount. The ACP launched on December 31, 2021, and was established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which provided \$14.2 billion to fund the program.

Benefit Amount

The ACP benefit provides an eligible household a monthly service discount of up to \$30 a month for broadband service, or up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands.

Eligible households can also receive a one-time connected device discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop, or tablet from participating providers if the household contributes more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price of the device.

There are currently over 1800 providers in the program and over 19 million households enrolled in the program.

Eligible Households

A household is eligible if:

Household income is at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, or

If a member of the household meets at least *one* of the criteria below:

- Participates in SNAP, Medicaid, Federal Housing Assistance, SSI, WIC, or Lifeline;
- Participates in one of these Tribal specific programs and lives on qualifying Tribal lands: Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal TANF, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, or Head Start (income based);
- Participates in Free or Reduced-Price School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program, including the USDA Community Eligibility Provision schools;
- Received a Pell Grant during the current award year;
- Receives Veterans Pension or Survivors Benefit; or
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income program.

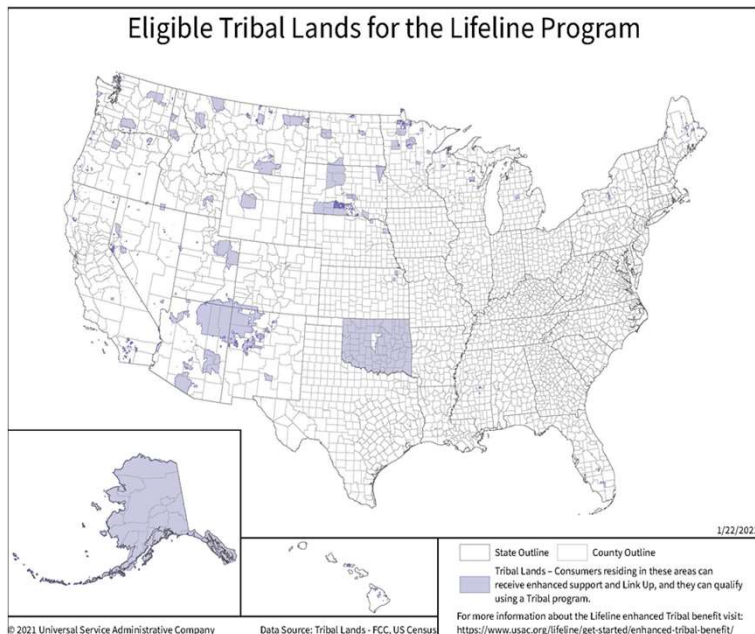


Illustration of Tribal lands on the [nationwide map](#)

Eligible Households on Qualifying Tribal Lands

The household is located on qualifying Tribal lands. Tribal lands include:

- Any federally recognized Indian tribe's reservation, pueblo, or colony;
- Former reservations in Oklahoma;
- Alaska Native regions established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act;
- Indian allotments;
- Hawaiian Home Lands; and
- Any land approved as Tribal for the purposes of the Lifeline program or the ACP by the FCC's Office of Native Affairs and Policy and Wireline Competition Bureau

Two Steps to Enroll

- 1) Go to [GetInternet.gov](https://www.getinternet.gov) to apply or print out a mail-in application; and
 - 2) Once qualified, contact your preferred participating provider to select a plan and have the discount applied to your bill.
- Some providers may have an alternative application that they will ask you to complete.
 - Eligible households must **both apply for the program and contact a participating provider to select a service plan.**

Recent Application Enhancements

Over the last few months, the Commission and USAC have made a number of enhancements to help streamline the National Verifier application process for consumers, including:

- Streamlining the account creation process by not requiring the consumer to sign back in after creating an account;
- Updating the identify verification section to clarify that providing the last four digits of your SSN will likely result in faster processing, that the identity check does not affect the consumer's credit, and which types of government IDs are acceptable
- Updating error messages that consumers receive so that it is easier for consumers to understand the action they need to take, and why they have received an error while applying and simplifying the language outlining document requirements, with acceptable documentation examples added

Recent Application Enhancements

- Reducing the number of steps that a consumer must take before finding out their eligibility
 - For those who can qualify through a data-match with an eligibility database, applicants now only have 3 steps before learning if they qualify
 - Program selection now only requires 1 question for the majority of applicants, asking them to select if they qualify for Medicaid and/or SNAP
- Simplifying the consumer certification language and process to one step, requiring only 1 written confirmation
- Automatically moving an applicant to the next step of the application once they create an account

Recent Application Enhancements

- Giving applicants explicit instructions to sign up with a provider once they are approved
- Simplifying the application process for mobile phone users; and
- Transitioning the application landing page to [GetInternet.gov](https://www.getinternet.gov) or [AccedeaInternet.gov](https://www.accedeaInternet.gov) for Spanish speakers. [AffordableConnectivity.gov](https://www.affordableconnectivity.gov) remains a resource for consumers, participating providers, and digital navigators.

We've made some updates: This is now an official FCC website. View the previous [non-FCC content](#).

Save on your internet bill

With the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program, you can save on your bill and may be able to get high-speed internet for free.

Apply



What are the program benefits?

- Service discount up to \$30/month
- Service discount up to \$75/month on qualifying Tribal lands
- Device discount up to \$100 for a qualifying device

How can I qualify?

- You, or your child or dependent are enrolled in government programs like Medicaid, SNAP, WIC, or others, or,
- Based on your household income

Learn more about [how you qualify](#).

How do I sign up?

1 | Apply

Apply now. We'll help you every step of the way.

Apply

2 | Get internet

Contact an [internet company](#) to get your benefit.

Filing a Consumer Complaint

The screenshot shows the FCC website's homepage. The top navigation bar includes the FCC logo, the text 'Federal Communications Commission', and navigation options: 'Browse by CATEGORY', 'Browse by BUREAUS & OFFICES', and a search bar. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links for 'About the FCC', 'Proceedings & Actions', 'Licensing & Databases', 'Reports & Research', 'News & Events', and 'For Consumers'. The main content area is divided into three columns. The left column, titled 'Headlines', lists several news items with dates and titles. The middle column features a 'Featured' section for the 'Affordable Connectivity Program' and an 'Access Now' section with links to 'PSIX-ESIX', 'ECFS', 'EDOCS', 'ULS', 'FRN', and 'Auctions'. The right column contains three prominent buttons: 'File a Consumer Complaint', 'File a Public Comment', and 'File a Public Safety Report'. A yellow arrow points to the 'File a Consumer Complaint' button. The bottom right corner of the page features a small accessibility icon.

Headlines

- July 3, 2023 - Public Notice
Broadband Data Collection Window Opens July 3, 2023
- June 30, 2023 - Consumer Advisory
FCC & State AGs Warn of Student Loan Debt Scam Robocalls & Robotexts
- June 30, 2023 - News Release
FCC Announces Critical Robocall Protection Takes Effect
- June 29, 2023 - News Release
FCC Announces Tentative Agenda for July Open Meeting
[Related Materials >](#)
- June 28, 2023 - News Release
FCC Announces Over \$29 Million in Emergency Connectivity Funding

Featured

Affordable Connectivity Program
Help for households to afford the broadband they need for work, school, healthcare, and more.
[Find out if you qualify and how to participate](#)

Access Now [See more](#)

- PSIX-ESIX**
Interference Complaints
- ECFS**
Electronic Comment Filing System
- EDOCS**
Commission Documents
- ULS**
Universal Licensing System
- FRN**
FCC Registration Number
- Auctions**
Spectrum Auctions

File a Consumer Complaint

File a Public Comment

File a Public Safety Report

Filing a Consumer Complaint

The screenshot shows the FCC Complaints website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the FCC logo and the text "Complaint Center". Below this, a main heading reads "File an informal consumer complaint / Tell your story". A search bar is present with the placeholder text "Search our support" and a "Search" button. To the right of the search bar, there are several links: "File an Unwanted Call Complaint", "What Happens After I File My Complaint?", "Frequently Asked Questions", and "How Other Agencies Can Help". Below the search bar, there is a note: "Para presentar una queja en español, llamar al: 888-CALL-FCC (888-225-5322)".

The main content area is divided into three sections:

- File a complaint**: A section with a sub-heading and a paragraph: "If your complaint is about a telecom billing or service issue, we will serve your complaint on your provider. Your provider has 30 days to send you a response to your complaint. We encourage you to contact your provider to resolve your issue prior to filing a complaint." Below this are four buttons with icons: "Phone" (phone handset), "Internet" (globe), "TV" (television set), and "Radio" (microphone).
- Share your experience with data caps**: A section with a sub-heading and a paragraph: "Share your unique experiences and challenges regarding data caps on your fixed or mobile broadband plans. Sharing your broadband data cap experience is not the same as filing a complaint. Your filing will not be served on your provider and you will not hear back from the FCC." Below this is a "Data Caps" button with a database icon.
- File an ACP complaint**: A section with a sub-heading and a paragraph: "If your complaint is about an Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) billing or service issue, we will serve your complaint on your provider. Your provider has 30 days to send you a response to your complaint." Below this is an "ACP" button with a Wi-Fi icon.

A yellow arrow points from the bottom of the page to the "ACP" button.

Filing a Consumer Complaint

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL consumercomplaints.fcc.gov/hc/en-us/articles/4412582232980-Need-Help-with-an-Affordable-Connectivity-Program-ACP-or-Emergency-Broadband-Benefit-EBB-complaint. The page features the FCC logo and navigation links for 'FCC Home' and 'Consumer Inquiries and Complaint Center'. A search bar is present with the placeholder text 'Search our support' and a 'Search' button. Below the search bar is a banner for the 'Affordable Connectivity Program' with the tagline 'Helping Households Connect' and an image of a family. To the right of the banner is a 'Recently viewed articles' section with a link to 'Phone Form - Descriptions of Complaint Issues'. The main content area contains the following text:

Congress recently created the [Affordable Connectivity Program \(ACP\)](#) as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The ACP is a new long-term, \$14 billion program, which replaced the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Program.

You can learn more about the Affordable Connectivity Program including what the benefit provides, and who is eligible by visiting fcc.gov/acp.

Need Help with the ACP?

If you need to talk to someone about your eligibility or application status, please call the ACP helpline at (877) 384-2575.

If you are having issues with your provider involving the Affordable Connectivity Program, you may want to file an informal consumer complaint with us. If your issue is a billing and service issue, we will serve your complaint on your provider. Your provider has 30 days to send you a response to your complaint. We encourage you to contact your provider to attempt to resolve your issue prior to filing a complaint.

To proceed with filing a complaint with the FCC, please go to [this form](#) and select "availability" as the Issue and fill in the form.

Para presentar una queja en español, llamar al: 888-CALL-FCC (888-225-5322)

A yellow arrow points from the bottom of the page to the link 'this form' in the text above.

Resources

- **To apply:** [GetInternet.gov](https://www.getinternet.gov)
- **For more information:** [AffordableConnectivity.gov](https://www.affordableconnectivity.gov)
- **FCC's ACP Consumer Hub:** [fcc.gov/ACP](https://www.fcc.gov/ACP)
- **Help Line:** Call the ACP Support Center at (877) 384-2575 seven days a week from 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. ET or send an email to ACPSupport@usac.org
- **Consumer FAQ:** www.fcc.gov/affordable-connectivity-program-consumer-faq
- **Toolkits:** <https://www.fcc.gov/acp-consumer-outreach-toolkit> and www.affordableconnectivity.gov/community-resources/
- **Accessibility:** FCC504@fcc.gov
- **Contact:** ACPinfo@fcc.gov

Resources

- [Video demonstration](#) of the new consumer application
- [Screenshots](#) of different workflows in the new consumer application
- Updated [online application instructions](#) are available in English and 9 other languages
- Information on [database connections](#) that verify consumer eligibility automatically
- [Sign up](#) for ACP email updates and upcoming events
- Find upcoming trainings and other resources on the [ACP Learn page](#)

Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program

Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program Overview

- The ACP Outreach Grant Program is one tool among a comprehensive set of measures authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (Infrastructure Act) and implemented by the FCC to help bridge the digital divide.
- The FCC established the ACP Outreach Grant Program, which provides eligible state, local, or Tribal governmental and non-governmental entities with the funding and resources needed to increase awareness of and participation in the ACP among those eligible households most in need of affordable connectivity. The ACP Outreach Grant Program includes four sub-programs:
 - National Competitive Outreach Program (NCOP);
 - Tribal Competitive Outreach Program (TCOP);
 - Your Home, Your Internet Pilot Outreach Grants; and
 - ACP Navigator Pilot Program Outreach Grants.
- There have been two rounds of ACP Outreach Grant Program funding opportunities.
 - Round One included all 4 sub-programs and the application window closed on January 9, 2023.
 - Round Two includes NCOP and TCOP. The NCOP application window closed on June 30, 2023. **The TCOP application window closes on July 28, 2023.**

Affordable Connectivity Pilot Programs

- The FCC created two one-year pilot programs designed to increase awareness of and facilitate enrollment in the Affordable Connectivity Program and to provide consumers assistance with ACP applications.
 - **Your Home, Your Internet Pilot Program (YHYI):** increases awareness of the ACP, specifically among recipients of federal housing assistance. This pilot program facilitates enrollment in the ACP by providing targeted assistance with completion of the program application. BHYI Pilot Participants include Utah Paiute Tribal Housing Authority.
 - **ACP Navigator Pilot Program (NPP):** provides a limited number of neutral, trusted third-party entities access to the National Verifier for purposes of assisting consumers with completing and submitting an application for the Affordable Connectivity Program.
- On April 6, 2023, the FCC released the final list of 23 entities selected to participate in the Your Home, Your Internet Pilot Program and 11 entities selected to participate in the ACP Navigator Pilot Program.
- The period of performance for both Pilot Programs has begun and Pilot Participants are beginning consumer outreach activities.

Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program – Round 1

- The FCC made the following funding allocations during Round 1:
 - \$4,995,831 for 23 Your Home, Your Internet Pilot Outreach Grant applicants
 - \$2,449,311 for 9 Affordable Connectivity Navigator Pilot Program Outreach Grant applicants
 - \$60,000,000 for the National Competitive Outreach Program to fund outreach activities to increase awareness of and encourage participation in the ACP for eligible low-income households; and
 - \$6,022,243 for the Tribal Competitive Outreach Program to fund outreach activities to increase awareness of and encourage participation in the ACP for households on Tribal lands
- NCOP and TCOP funding was allocated to 197 applicants.
- More information on Round 1 funding allocations is available in the Public Notices released on [March 10, 2023 \(NCOP and TCOP, DA 23-194\)](#) and [March 15, 2023 \(Pilot Grants, DA 23-219\)](#).

Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program – Round 2

- On May 25, 2023, the FCC issued two Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) for up to \$10 million.
 - \$5 million for the National Competitive Outreach Program (NCOP)
 - **\$5 million for the Tribal Competitive Outreach Program (TCOP)**
- The maximum funding ceiling per applicant is \$400,000 and the period of performance is one year, from November 2023-November 2024.
- NCOP: Only eligible governmental and non-governmental entities in eligible States and Territories are eligible to apply for NCOP. Nationally-based non-profits may be eligible for NCOP funding.
- **TCOP: Eligibility will be limited to governmental and non-governmental Tribal entities that will conduct ACP outreach and application assistance to eligible households on qualifying Tribal Lands**
- Grant recipients and sub-recipients that received funding under the initial ACP Outreach Grant Program are not eligible for ACP Outreach Grant Program – Round 2.

TCOP Round 2 Eligibility

TCOP eligibility will be limited to Tribal governmental and non-governmental entities that will conduct ACP outreach and enrollment assistance to eligible households on qualifying Tribal Lands:

- Tribal governments and subdivisions thereof;
- Tribal designated housing entities;
- Tribal designated community-based organizations to include social service organizations;
- Tribal designated community anchor institutions;
- Tribal designated public service organizations; and
- Consortia of the entities listed above.

Tribal Nations do not have to be federally recognized to apply for the ACP Outreach Grant Program

There are no exceptions to the TCOP eligibility requirements and submitted applications will only be reviewed if they meet the above-listed eligibility requirements.

Key TCOP Dates and Times



- Application Start Date:** May 25, 2023
- Application Due Date:** **July 28, 2023 @ 6:00 PM EDT**
- Award Announcement Date:** End of September 2023
- Award Issuance/Start of Performance Period:** November 2023

TCOP Applicant Resources

- [NOFO](#)
- [NOFO Fact Sheet](#)
- [ACP Outreach Tribal Webinar](#)

Contact Information: ACPGrants@fcc.gov

Website: www.fcc.gov/acp-grants

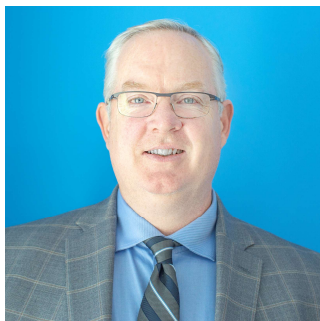
Universal Service: Connecting Millions to Broadband Services

July 12, 2023



Universal Service
Administrative Co.

Meet Our Team



Craig Davis

Vice President | E-Rate

Craig.davis@usac.org



Gem Labarta

Tribal Liaison | Shared Services

TribalLiaison@usac.org

Agenda

- Introduction to USAC
- One USAC: Four Programs
 - E-Rate Program
 - High Cost Program
 - Rural Health Care Program
 - Lifeline Program
- Service Provider Information

Purpose

- Working at the infrastructure, community, and individual level, Universal Service Fund (USF) programs help connect Tribal communities to phone and broadband services.
- This session will introduce you to opportunities to further connect your community through USF programs.

A tall, lattice-structured communication tower stands on the right side of the frame, silhouetted against a vibrant sunset sky. The tower is equipped with several large, circular antennas and smaller sensors. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a bright orange and yellow near the horizon, with scattered clouds catching the low light. In the background, a range of blue mountains stretches across the horizon, and a body of water is visible in the foreground. The overall scene conveys a sense of connectivity and infrastructure in a natural setting.

Everyone. Connected.

Introduction to USAC

- The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation designated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as the permanent administrator of the USF and the Congressional Response Programs.
- Works at the direction of the FCC to protect the integrity of universal service through:
 - Informing and educating program audiences
 - Collecting and distributing contributions
 - Promoting program compliance

USF Programs Administered by USAC



Lifeline Program

Discounted phone and internet service to eligible low-income consumers.



E-Rate Program

Funding for broadband services to eligible schools and libraries.



Rural Health Care Program

Funding for telecom and broadband services for eligible rural health care providers.



High Cost Program

Reduced rates for telecom and broadband services in eligible high-cost areas.

E-Rate Program

Ensuring that schools and libraries across the U.S. are connected to information and resources through the internet



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E-Rate Program

- Provides support to schools and libraries across the nation to obtain affordable, high-speed broadband services and internal connections to connect students and library patrons with learning opportunities and services.
- Eligible applicants: Public or private schools (K-12), libraries, and groups of schools and libraries (e.g., consortia, districts, systems)
- Eligible services: Schools and libraries are eligible for funding for 20% to 90% of the costs of eligible equipment and services:

Category One: Services that support connectivity **to** schools and libraries. For example, data transmission and Internet access service, including special construction services for network builds.

Category Two: Services that support connectivity **within** schools and libraries. This includes internal connections (i.e., routers, cabling, or other equipment needed for a Wi-Fi network); managed internal broadband services, and basic maintenance of internal connections ([Full list available](#)).

E-Rate Program: Tribal Libraries

- In 2022, the FCC amended its E-Rate rules to include Tribal libraries in its definition of library and clarify Tribal libraries are eligible for support.
- A library may be designated as a Tribal library by a Tribal Government (e.g., pursuant to a Tribal Resolution).
- A Tribal library may also work with the state library administrative agency where they are located.
- Tribal libraries should demonstrate three characteristics commonly associated with Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grants to Native American libraries:
 - Regularly scheduled hours,
 - Staff, and
 - Materials available for library users.

E-Rate Program: Improving E-Rate for Tribal Applicants

New Draft Report and Order and FNPRM Seeks to Improve E-Rate Rules and Processes to Encourage Greater Tribal Participation in the E-Rate Program

- Allow Tribal college and university libraries that also serve as public libraries in their communities to apply for and receive E-Rate support.
- Create a new competitive bidding exemption for libraries seeking Category Two services and equipment that cost less than \$3,600, per year, per library.
- Increase the maximum Category Two discount rate to from 85% to 90% and the Category Two five-year funding floor from \$25,000 to \$55,000 for Tribal libraries.
- Adopt a definition of “Tribal” for the E-Rate program.
- Expand USAC Board of Directors to add a Tribal community representative.
- Increase USAC outreach and training on E-Rate and the USF programs for Tribal applicants.
- Seek comments on simplification of other program rules for all E-Rate applicants.

High Cost and the Connect America Fund

Expanding access to modern communications networks across rural America

High Cost Program

- The federal universal service High Cost program (including the Connect America Fund) is designed to ensure that consumers in rural, insular, and high-cost areas have access to modern communications networks capable of providing voice and broadband service, both fixed and mobile, at rates that are reasonably comparable to those in urban areas.
- The program fulfills this universal service goal by allowing eligible carriers who serve these areas to recover some of their costs from the federal USF.

High Cost Program: How It Works

- The FCC determines areas of the country that are eligible for funding.
- Through different support processes, eligible service providers are authorized for support in deploying network infrastructure in those areas and providing service.
- Service providers report progress on deployment.
- USAC monitors compliance with build-out obligations.

Rural Health Care Program

Connecting health care facilities across America



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Rural Health Care Program

- The Rural Health Care (RHC) program provides funding to eligible health care providers for telecommunications and broadband services needed to deliver health care.
 - The Telecommunications (Telecom) Program funds voice and other telecommunications services.
 - The Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) Program funds broadband services, network equipment, and related costs.
- Eligible applicants: Must be a non-profit or public health care provider located in a rural area as defined by the FCC. Eligible health care providers must meet [program requirements](#).

Lifeline Program

Lowering the monthly cost of phone and internet service

Lifeline Program

- Eligible low-income households receive a discount off their monthly broadband or telephone bill between \$5.25 and \$9.25 (depending on service type).
- Each eligible household can receive one Lifeline benefit.
- Consumers must meet one eligibility criterion described below and apply through the Lifeline National Verifier:
 - Income at or below 135 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines
 - Participate in Medicaid
 - Participate in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Participate in Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
 - Participate in Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
 - Participate in Veterans Pension or Survivors Benefit

Lifeline Program Enhanced Tribal Benefit

- Lifeline offers an enhanced benefit to consumers who live on qualifying Tribal lands:
 - Up to \$25/month extra is available for subscribers on qualifying Tribal lands (up to \$34.25 per month total).
 - Up to \$100 “Link Up” benefit to connect telecommunications services from a carrier receiving high-cost support on qualifying Tribal lands. Available once per residential address.
- Additional eligibility options for consumers living on Tribal lands include participation in:
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance (BIA-GA)
 - Tribally Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
 - Tribal Head Start (must meet qualifying income standard)
 - Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

Questions?

Service Provider Participation Requirements

E-Rate Program: Service Providers

- Obtain a Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN/498 ID) and register in SAM.gov to obtain a Unique Entity ID (UEI). (You will need a UEI to submit the FCC Form 498.)
- Submit bids in response to applicants' requests for service (FCC Form 470) that are posted on USAC's website.
- If selected by an applicant, sign a contract with the school or library to provide the requested services and/or equipment.
- Provide agreed-upon services and/or equipment.
- Submit the Annual Service Provider Certification (FCC Form 473) to be able to either invoice USAC directly or allow the applicant invoice USAC directly.
- Invoice USAC for the amount discounted from the applicant's bill (i.e., Service Provider Invoice (SPI) or FCC Form 474) OR invoice the applicant for the full costs of the services and equipment so they can invoice USAC for the discounted amount (i.e., Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR) or FCC Form 472).

High Cost Program: Service Providers

- Eligibility criteria and fund processes vary from fund to fund.
- To participate, service providers must be a registered eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC).
- Participating ETC must file an FCC Form 481 annually, detailing financial and operational information and engagement with Tribal governments.
- Providers file build-out data with the High Cost Universal Broadband (HUBB) portal each year.
- Participating providers must submit to performance testing and verification reviews.

Rural Health Care Program: Service Providers

- Request an FCC Registration Number from the FCC.
- Complete the FCC Form 498 through USAC.
- Review and respond to RHC information requests.
- If selected by the Health Care Provider, sign a service agreement with the HCP.
- Credit the HCP for costs covered by the RHC program funding request.
- Invoice USAC for the approved funding amount.

Lifeline Program: Service Providers

- Must be an eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC).
- Non-facilities based providers must have an FCC-approved Compliance Plan before they can become an ETC.
- Obtain Study Area Code (SAC) and a Service Provider Identification Number (498 ID/SPIN).
- Set up Lifeline system access with USAC.
- Begin enrolling consumers and provide Lifeline discounted service.
- Claim reimbursement for discounts passed on to qualifying Lifeline consumers.

Questions?

USAC Contact Information

- For program information, visit www.USAC.org
- Consumers interested in Lifeline and the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) can visit www.LifelineSupport.org and www.AffordableConnectivity.gov
- For general USAC Tribal information, visit the [Tribal Nations webpage](#).
- USAC's Tribal Liaison can answer questions and connect you to resources. Contact Gem Shandiin Labarta at TribalLiaison@USAC.org.

Thank You!



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